

MOVA

SUPPORT THE VOCA BRIDGE

\$20M needed to bridge cuts to VOCA programs to maintain crime victim services

What is the VOCA Bridge?

The **VOCA Bridge** is a multi-year \$60 million funding request to the Massachusetts Legislature to bridge impending cuts to VOCA programs to maintain victim services. A continued state investment will support and stabilize critical victim service programs throughout the Commonwealth and ensure that access to trauma informed services remains accessible amid devastating reductions in federal funding.

To date, the Legislature has allocated \$40 million of the total request to support the VOCA Bridge.

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Funding

MOVA is the sole administrator of federal Victim of Crime Act's (VOCA) funding in Massachusetts. VOCA is not funded by taxpayers, but rather originates from monetary penalties associated with federal criminal convictions.

VOCA dollars are the only funding source available for services to all victims of crime.

Funding available for VOCA grants is historically low. The future of victim services across the Commonwealth is in jeopardy as a result of significantly reduced annual federal funding and few new deposits into the **Crime Victims Fund**.

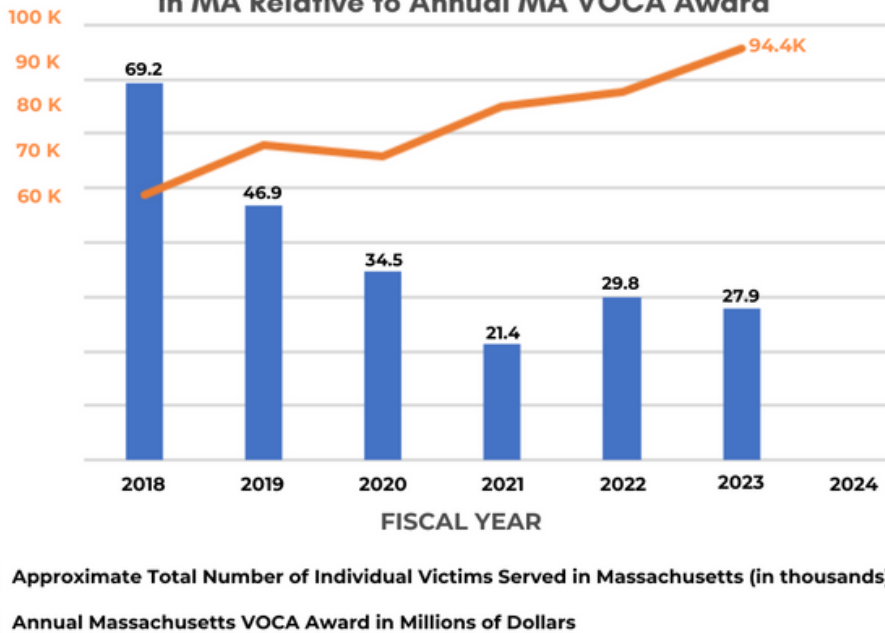
This decrease has been largely caused by an increase in the Department of Justice's use of deferred prosecution and non-prosecution agreements, the monetary penalties associated with which are deposited into the General Treasury rather than the Crime Victims Fund. This change in the Department of Justice's practice ultimately results in a decrease in funding for victims of crime.

The result: Any decrease in the funds available for distribution results in fewer victims and survivors served, as well as potential loss of essential staff for direct victim service programming, which threatens agencies' livelihoods and ability to prevent future violence by working to address root causes.

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IMPACT ON MASSACHUSETTS

Number of Individual Victims Served by VOCA Dollars in MA Relative to Annual MA VOCA Award



VOCA grant awards, administered by MOVA, have steadily declined since FY18, reflecting reductions in the federal VOCA fund. Yet, the demand for services has increased (detailed on the left).

Massachusetts' VOCA awards have also steadily declined in the last six years. The projected federal funding allocation for the next year represents a 40% decrease from current awards. This means there is less funding available for crime victim support services, despite the reality that the demand for services has increased.

Reduced available dollars continue to impact funding to services that support all victims of crime including children's advocacy centers, sexual assault programs, domestic violence programs, homicide bereavement programs, victim legal assistance services, elder abuse programs and other services to historically marginalized and underserved crime victims who were disproportionately impacted.

Where are we now?

The Legislature's commitment to supporting the VOCA Bridge thus far has provided a critical lifeline for victims of crime to access services and address increasing demands.

\$20M was included in the FY23 General Appropriations Act that supports programming in the current fiscal year and avoided an average 22% reduction per program. An additional \$20M was committed through Chapter 268 of the Acts of 2022, passed November 2022, to support services through FY24.

Governor Healey introduced a supplemental funding bill to the Legislature that includes the remaining \$20M investment that would fully fund the VOCA Bridge. Funding in [**H.3545**](#) will build upon prior investments passed by the Massachusetts Legislature to support programming through fiscal year 2025 (FY25).

MOVA worked closely with victim service stakeholders nationally to advocate for critical changes to the VOCA statute to provide sustainability to the Crime Victims Fund and ensure continued services nationally and here in Massachusetts. On July 20, 2021, our bill, VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021, was signed into law by President Biden.

However, passage of the law does not immediately impact MOVA's reduced funding for FY25. Congress is currently considering funding the Crime Victims Fund at \$1.2 billion, representing an approximately 40% reduction from the previous year. This reduction will continue to be felt by every state and territory through their formula grants.

With federal VOCA funds rapidly decreasing, victims are becoming increasingly reliant on state support to mitigate any potential consequences. An immediate funding supplement is required in order to maintain services in FY25, however, a long term solution is needed in order to provide consistent support for victims and the community programs that serve them.

REQUEST:

Support and expeditiously pass The VOCA Bridge to ensure the sustainability of victim services throughout the Commonwealth and to allow MOVA to better support survivors and their evolving needs.